



God’s Timing

The story of Lazarus gives us one of the clearest pictures of how God’s timing differs from ours. When Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus, the one He loved, was sick, they expected Him to come immediately. Instead, Jesus stayed where He was for two more days, and by the time He arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. From the family’s perspective, Jesus was late. Martha even expressed what they were probably all thinking, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21). But Jesus had not lost control of the situation. He was operating from a perspective they could not see. He had already declared that Lazarus’s sickness was “for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it” (John 11:4). If Jesus had arrived earlier, He could have healed Lazarus, and that would have been an extraordinary miracle. But because He waited, He did something even greater. He allowed Lazarus to die, then called him out of the grave and revealed to the gathered crowd that He was not merely One who could heal sickness. He was “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Many people witnessed the miracle and believed in Him (John 11:45). Jesus’ delay became the setting for a greater revelation of His authority over death. What looked like lateness from the human perspective was perfect timing from God’s perspective. We often see only the immediate circumstance, while God sees the people who will be affected, the lessons that will be learned, the doors that will open, and the purposes He is accomplishing beyond what we can comprehend. We cannot see what God sees from His vantage point, so we must ask Him for His perspective, seek His wisdom, and then trust Him when His timing does not match ours.

The Bible repeatedly shows us that God does not operate according to the urgency or limitations of our perspective. Sometimes Jesus acted immediately. When He healed the leper, “immediately the leprosy left him” (Mark 1:42), and when He spoke to the royal official about his dying son, the child was healed at the very hour Jesus spoke (John 4:50-53). At other times, Jesus deliberately waited. In John 2:4, when the need at the wedding in Cana arose, Jesus acknowledged, “My hour has not yet come.” He did perform the miracle but His words prior to the miracle, demonstrate that even His miraculous works should be carried out according to divine timing rather than human urgency. In John 7:30, His enemies sought to seize Him, “yet no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.” And sometimes what people desired was simply not done according to their wishes. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for the cup to pass from Him, yet surrendered Himself to the Father’s will, “yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). These passages reveal a God who sees the whole picture and knows exactly what He is doing. Psalm 31:15 declares, “My times are in Your hand,” while Galatians 4:4 tells us that “when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son.” God is never reacting to circumstances, caught off guard, or forced into a plan because something happened unexpectedly. His timing is governed by His complete knowledge, His sovereign purposes, and His eternal perspective. What feels immediate to us may not be immediate to God. What feels

delayed may be precisely on schedule. What we desperately want may not be what He chooses to do. The question for faith is not whether God will conform His timing to ours, but whether we will trust His wisdom when His timing does not make sense to us.

That is why we are called to trust God even when the circumstances look terrible and the outcome is not what we hoped or prayed for. Sometimes God's timing brings healing, deliverance, or an unmistakable miracle. Sometimes it brings a long season of waiting. Sometimes, from our earthly perspective, the outcome is devastating. The stories in the Bible reminds us that faith does not guarantee that every earthly circumstance will end the way we desire. James was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2), Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:54-60), and Jesus Himself willingly submitted to the cross rather than escaping it. Yet none of these events meant that God had lost control. The cross itself appeared to be the greatest defeat imaginable, but God was accomplishing the greatest victory in history through it. That should radically change how we respond when life does not go according to our plans. We cannot manage every circumstance into the outcome we want, nor can we demand that God explain every delay, disappointment, or loss before we will trust Him. Instead, we are called to align our faith and our actions with Scripture, obey what God has clearly commanded, pray for His wisdom and perspective, and release the results into His hands. Our responsibility is faithfulness; God's responsibility is the outcome. Nothing catches Him by surprise. Nothing occurs outside His knowledge. Nothing is beyond His ability to redeem. So when we cannot understand what God is doing, we can still trust who God is. Like the psalmist, we can say, "My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:15). God may not move when we think He should, in the way we think He should, or even produce the outcome we expected, but His timing is never accidental, and His purposes are never outside His control. Our calling is to stop trying to control what belongs to God, faithfully walk according to His Word, and trust Him with the timing.

Study Questions:

1. When have you interpreted God's delay as His absence or indifference, and what does the story of Lazarus challenge you to believe about what God may be accomplishing while you wait? (John 11:1-45)
2. Martha believed Jesus could have prevented Lazarus's death, but how did Jesus challenge her to move her faith from what she thought He should have done to who He actually is? (John 11:21-27)

3. What situation in your life are you trying to control because you struggle to trust God with the timing, and what would it look like to genuinely place that situation in His hands? (Psalm 31:14-15)

4. How does recognizing that God sees the entire picture while we see only a small portion of it change the way you should respond when His timing does not make sense? (Isaiah 55:8-9)

5. What can we learn from the fact that Jesus sometimes acted immediately, sometimes waited, and sometimes did not give people the outcome they requested about the difference between God's wisdom and our expectations? (Mark 1:40-42; John 11:1-6; Matthew 26:36-46)

6. How does Jesus' statement that His "hour" had not yet come demonstrate that God's purposes operate according to a divine timetable rather than human urgency? (John 2:1-4; John 7:30; John 12:23-27)

7. When God does not answer a prayer in the way or timeframe you expect, what determines whether you will continue trusting Him or begin believing that He has failed you? (Habakkuk 2:2-4)

8. How can the cross of Christ help us trust God when circumstances appear to be moving toward defeat, disappointment, or disaster? (Acts 2:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:18)

9. What does the suffering and martyrdom of faithful believers throughout the Bible teach us about whether God's faithfulness should be measured by our earthly circumstances or by His eternal purposes? (Acts 7:54-60; Acts 12:1-2; Hebrews 11:35-40)

10. Are there areas of your life where you are asking God to change the circumstances when He may instead be asking you to change your perspective, your obedience, or your trust? (Romans 12:2; James 1:2-5)

11. If you truly believed that nothing can surprise God and that He remains sovereign over every circumstance, what fear, decision, or situation would you need to surrender to Him today? (Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:28)

12. What specific action can you take this week to demonstrate that you trust God's timing rather than merely saying that you trust Him? (James 2:17; Psalm 37:3-7)